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Carter Rebounds Deftly On CIA Appointment

Unless the Senate's liberals derail his alternate choice for director of the Central Intelligence Agency as the conservatives upended his first selection, Jimmy Carter's nomination of Admiral Stansfield Turner for the post has the earmark of a two for one sale so dear to a housewife's ever pressed purse.

Politically, it demonstrates Carter's footwork is easily of varsity calibre.

A majority of the Senate Intelligence Committee turned thumbs down on Ted Sorensen, John F. Kennedy's speech writer, as a risky security venture and a man temperamentally unsuited to the rough and tumble world in which an intelligence agency must work.

Sorensen leaked a number of documents on Viet Nam labelled top secret by the Pentagon in an effort to show his White House chieftain played no part in getting Uncle Sam stuck in the southeastern Asian venture.

Though, as this column pointed out earlier, the documents could scarcely be regarded as unveiling vital defense secrets, Sorensen's judgment in pulling them from the file has to be questioned.

While he never made an effort to hide the fact of avoiding military service as a conscientious objector, most of the Committee members thought this could cloud his judgment in crucial situations.

In sending Turner's name to the Senate, Carter is proposing a man with excellent recommendations.

The one objection to him, certain to be raised by the liberals, is the superficial argument he comes from the military and the CIA should be kept under civilian control and direction.

Turner might be called an erstwhile neighbor of our area. He is native of Highland Park, one of Chicago's suburbs.

He and Carter were classmates at Annapolis.

class. Jimmy ranked 59th academically.

As Carter remarked, "He was so far ahead of all of us as to be no competition whatever."

Currently, Turner is serving as commander of southern Europe's NATO forces. Prior to that assignment, he held several important command posts in the Navy's seafaring arenas. At one time he directed the systems analysis division under the chief of naval operations and is a former head of the Naval War College.

During his stint at the College, Turner shook up that excellent but venerable institution. This gained him the well deserved reputation as an original thinker prone to lubricate or even drastically revise procedures which have turned rigid.

His tenure in the CNO's system analysis was predicated upon a thorough grounding in statistics.

Turner, however, has consistently stressed the difference between assembling figures and reading their portent.

This has put him at odds with many of his Pentagon conferres who annually bombard the White House with the latest comparison in numbers between tanks, guns, planes and ships held by the Soviet Union and the U.S. This numbers disparity favoring the Soviets is the Pentagon's argument for a larger budget.

Turner has publicly stated this doomsday picture has the peril of discouraging our friends and encouraging our enemies.

Uncle Sam, he contends, would do better to focus his sights on trends rather than upon statistics.

This is the essence of intelligence, an attitude which should stand Turner and the country in good stead if he is confirmed to run our most sensitive

Though not a spit and polish man, Turner is a no nonsense person, one not likely to be drawn into dubious schemes which have characterized some CIA moves in the past.

Like any mortal, the admiral is not puristic in possessing only virtues and no faults.

The composite is what counts and on that score he stands out most favorably.